**Name or Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Period: 1A 2A 1B 3B**

* **Place a check next to the statements that apply to you or that you have encountered.**
* **Don’t play with “ifs”—I mean right now, right here. Also, know that there is no “right” or “wrong” answer—academically, morally, or any other way. JUST ANSWER HONESTLY AND SIMPLY.**
* **You will turn this in to me, but I will not require you to share any of your answers.**

1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or

harassed.

1. I can turn on the television or open a magazine and see people of my race widely represented.
2. When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of

my color made it what it is.

1. I can be sure that I will be given curricular materials (textbooks, etc.) that represent my race in information, pictures, etc.
2. I can go into a supermarket and find the food I grew up with.
3. I can go into a hairdresser’s shop and find someone who knows how to work with my hair.
4. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, my skin color will not make people question my

financial responsibility.

1. Others don’t suggest or state that my physical shape, bearing, or body odor reflects my race.
2. I can worry/talk about racism without people thinking I am self-interested or self-serving.
3. I can take a job or enroll in a college without my co-workers or peers assuming I got in because

of my race.

1. I can be late to a meeting or event without having the lateness reflect on my race.
2. I can choose a motel to stay in without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be

mistreated.

1. I can travel in a town I don’t know and feel generally safe, even at night.
2. I am not asked to speak for all of the people of my racial group.
3. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk with the “person in charge” I will be facing a person of my

race.

1. If a cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out

because of my race.

1. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and magazines

featuring people of my race.

1. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in “flesh” color and have them more or less match my

skin.

1. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
2. I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race.
3. I can enroll in a class at college and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.

Name or student number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Period 1A 2A 1B 3B

What you just filled out is called the WHITE PRIVILEGE CHECKLIST

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, describes white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (McIntosh, 1989)

1. The examples you read are ways white individuals have privilege because they are white.
   1. What are two more ways you are privileged based on your race? Remember, we’re not talking about history or about typical “racial” issues—just the normal, everyday things you can do without thinking that a person of another race might not so easily do. Think about assumptions, safety issues, where you can go, what you can expect, etc.

**OR**

* 1. What are two more privileges you see existing for those who are white? (use the same criteria as those above)

1. Of course, racial privilege is only one form of privilege.
   1. Think of at least one privilege you have because of your gender:
   2. Think of at least one privilege you have because of your sexual orientation:
   3. Think of at least one privilege you have because of your socio-economic class:
   4. Think of at least one privilege you have because of your religious affiliation and/or beliefs:
   5. What are some privileges you DON’T have because of one of these factors? (gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, religion)
2. Can you think of other forms of privilege?
3. Speaking about *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver said “We didn't make the awful decisions our government imposed on Africa. We didn't call for the assassination of Lumumba; we hardly even knew about it. We just inherited these decisions, and now have to reconcile them with our sense of who we are. We're the captive witnesses, just like the wife and daughters of Nathan Price.”

Later in the same interview, she explained how those women in the novel deal with their cultural inheritance:

The four sisters and Orleanna represent five separate philosophical positions, not just in their family but also in my political examination of the world. This novel is asking, basically, "What did we do to Africa, and how do we feel about it?" It's a huge question. I'd be insulting my readers to offer only one answer. There are a hundred different answers along a continuum, with absolute paralyzing guilt on the one end and "What, me worry? I didn't do it!" on the other end. Orleanna is the paralyzed one here, and Rachel is "What, me worry?" Leah, Adah, and Ruth May take other positions in between, having to do with social activism, empirical analysis, and spirituality, respectively.

Of course when we talk about the history of African-Americans, we’re not talking about international political intrigue in a far-away place. This history is far more recent and close-to-home. Still you can almost paraphrase Kingsolver, changing just a few nouns and verbs:

*We didn’t make the awful decisions [others] imposed on African-Americans. We didn’t call for the [forced enslavement of thousands of human beings or the decades of inhumane treatment after the Emancipation Proclamation]; we hardly even knew about it. We just inherited these decisions, and now have to reconcile them with our sense of who we are. We’re the captive witnesses [of a history we cannot change and the lingering social problems that still exist because of it]. . . . What did we do to [African-Americans], and how do we feel about it? It’s a huge question . . . There are a hundred different answers along a continuum, with absolute paralyzing guilt on the one end and “What, me worry? I didn’t do it!” on the other end.*

What can you do with the information and new awareness of these issues? What possibilities exist beyond the extremes? Clearly there is room for the “social activism, empirical analysis, and spirituality” Kingsolver illustrates with her allegorical characters. Do any of those options fit a constructive response you can pursue?

Be realistic and honest with yourself (don’t just say what you think you’re ‘supposed’ to say). **What is something helpful and constructive you can do (even if only for yourself)?** Blissful ignorance is not an option now!

